

Consumer Alert for July 2007

Opt-out of pre-approved credit offers!

Are you tired of getting unwanted mail offering you “pre-approved” credit cards and loans? Did you know that you have the right to take your name off of lists that businesses use to send you this unwelcomed mail? The Consumer Protection Unit would like to tell you how to permanently remove your name from the lists that credit report agencies give to businesses that send you unsolicited pre-approved credit card and loan offers that clog up your mail box.

The major national credit report agencies —Equifax, Experian, Trans Union, and Innovis—generate lists of people’s names and home address that business use to send out prescreened offers of credit cards and loans. These lists are based on your credit report that is kept by the credit agencies, which businesses use to evaluate your creditworthiness for their prescreened offers. Businesses benefit from better marketing because they are able to send their offers to prescreened consumers. Consumers, however, are hassled by annoying mail and, most important, may be more at risk of identity theft, should pre-approved credit cards and loan offers become lost or stolen.

To halt this unwanted mail, you must notify the credit agencies that you no longer want to receive these offers and want to be removed from any prescreened lists. You can opt out of receiving these offers permanently or for a five-year period. Follow these steps below for the fastest way to get your name and home address permanently removed:

- 1) Go to the web site www.optoutprescreen.com.
- 2) Click the link “Click Here to Opt-In or Opt-Out” at the bottom of the screen.
- 3) Select the option, “Permanent Opt-Out by Mail” to be permanently removed. (Or, you may select to opt out for only five years or you may choose to opt in at a later time if you change your mind and want to start receiving prescreened offers again.)
- 4) Follow the directions given on the screen and have ready your full name, home address, social security number, and date of birth—you will be asked to give them.
- 5) Print out, sign, and mail in the form that certifies that you want to be permanently removed from lists for prescreen offers of pre-approved credit cards and loans. **You must send in this form to opt out of prescreened offers permanently.**

You can also call **1-888-567-8688 (1-888-5-OPT-OUT)** to opt out by phone, but you will still need to sign and send in the form that certifies you want to be permanently removed.

Even if you choose to remove your name from the lists used for prescreened offers, you might still receive offers for credit cards and loans. These offers, however, will no longer be based on your credit report maintained by the credit report agencies. You may also contact businesses directly and ask to be placed on their internal list of individuals who no longer want to be contacted about pre-approved offers. Finally, the Direct Marketing Association compiles a list of individuals who want to opt out of national mailing lists. For more information on their “Do-Not-Mail” list, visit their website at: www.dmaconsumers.org/consumerassistance.html.